My Take: From COVID Caterpillar to Emerging Butterfly

Community



This July message is late. Really late. And I have no good excuse for being so far behind deadline. The truth is that there were other things that distracted me and many of those distractions entailed enjoying as many warm, sunny days as I could. There's a purple butterfly bush in my garden and I enjoy watching the beautiful butterflies that it attracts.

These days, I feel a lot like those butterflies — finally able to emerge this summer, float by friends' homes, be more social. Many of us spent much of last year indoors, shrouded in masks, and dressed down. Our homes became our cocoons and because we were forced to spend so much time inside, we had to figure out new ways to make that space count. We came up with new routines and ways of doing things and remained connected via video conference, phone calls, and text messages.

Whether it was getting our jobs done or simply staying in touch with the outside world, technology helped make our homes larger, extended our reach, and impacted our day-to-day lives. The time indoors also gave us the opportunity to reflect on what's important, be it spending time with family in our homes or learning how to spend *quality* time with ourselves.

Journaling is something I've always done, but I admit that I became more dedicated to it during the pandemic. I've spoken in this column previously about the benefits I've derived from my gratitude journal, but during quarantine, I took that introspection a step further and I wrote a book! It's titled *Take Six: Essential Habits to Own Your Destiny, Overcome Challenges, And Unlock Opportunities*, and it shares life lessons that I wish I had learned earlier in my career and that are now offered to help others define their goals and chart a pathway for achieving them. Through a combination of stories and exercises, these lessons are reduced to six essential habits that I believe are key to unlocking opportunities.

The process of writing the book, while challenging, became an extension of my weekly journaling discussions with Debra Hilton, the very talented "ghostwriter" who worked with me to question and probe until the book took form, were like therapy for both of us — she in Melbourne, me in Maryland,

both doing our best to cope through the pandemic. At the end of what was a long, socially distant winter, the time spent writing this book allowed for reflection, sharing, growth, and yes, another emergence. I can now add ForbesBooks author to my portfolio of accomplishments.

During the pandemic, many of you also explored a previously untapped talent, found time to devote to an old hobby, or revived interests that had been dormant. I would love to hear from you about how shifting your focus helped pull you through the pandemic to emerge a bit more reinvigorated or better grounded. What matters to you?

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We've all learned, and continue to learn, a lot from the global pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and quarantines. We learned what our teams can contribute to the business and how talent coupled with resilience makes for a winning combination. We learned how to connect on deeper levels with our colleagues and our customers, as well as with our friends and families. We learned how to pivot and change the ways we do business, with many of us facing down extreme challenges to our financial bottom lines and more.

But most of all, we learned how to be flexible, not only with ourselves, but with the people we work with, lead, and advise. As we all prepare for whatever may lie ahead, the notion of "business as usual" will be anything but! Thinking about the beautiful butterflies in my summer garden, it's a fact of nature that a caterpillar may go into a cocoon, but once a butterfly emerges from that cocoon, it can never be a caterpillar again. That doesn't mean the butterfly loses the knowledge or the lessons learned during its time on the ground. I like to think it uses those lessons to push forward and fly.

The pandemic changed life as we know it and our return to normal looks a bit different. I hope we all take the lessons learned — the growth from adversity and challenges — to continue pushing our organizations and ourselves forward.

Onward and upward, butterflies!

Veta T. Richardson



Former President & CEO

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Veta T. Richardson is the immediate past president and chief executive officer of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC). Headquartered in Washington, DC, ACC is the world's largest legal association dedicated exclusively to serving the interests of in-house counsel. With an international membership of more than 45,000 in-house lawyers at more than 10,000 organizations in 85 countries, ACC serves as the "voice of the in-house bar" for corporate lawyers at 98 percent of the Fortune 100 and 51 percent of the Global 1000.

With more than 60 chapter operations around the world, Richardson's top priorities as CEO involve continuing to increase ACC's global footprint and charting the organization through a strategic plan and vision designed to strengthen its position as the global voice for in-house counsel. Members look to ACC to advocate in support of their rights and interests as in-house counsel, as well as to offer the practice resources, education, global legal and regulatory analysis, and networking opportunities needed to advance their professional development.